FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Country of Origin Placarding for Meat Products

(Helena) --- The Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Weights and Measures Bureau will hold a hearing in Helena on Wednesday, November 29, to take public comment on the proposed rules to implement the Country of Origin Placarding (COOP) Act. The proposed rules establish retailer placarding requirements for beef, pork, poultry and lamb in order to give consumers information on a meat products' country of origin.

The hearing will begin at 1:00 PM, in the Department of Public Health and Human Services Auditorium, 111 Sanders Street.

Under Montana Code Annotated Title 30, chapter 12, part 7, if meat is produced in a country other than the United States or if the origin is unknown, the product must be placarded.

(more)

If the meat is produced entirely in Montana or entirely in the United States, placarding is voluntary. Section 30-12-730, MCA, also provides for voluntary labeling for products produced entirely in Montana. Prepared or ready to eat foods that include beef, pork, poultry and lamb are exempt from the statutory requirements. The statutory provisions become void if the federal government adopts regulations to implement country of origin labeling for beef, pork, poultry and lamb.

The proposed rules were drafted based on recommendations from the Governor's Country of Origin Labeling Advisory Council, a diverse group representing consumers, agricultural producers and processors, retail sellers, the Board of Livestock, and the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce and Labor and Industry.

Adoption of rules is required for administration of the Act in order to clarify what products require placarding, what statements are required on the placards, and what form of placarding is permissible. Written public comment will be accepted by the Department until December 6, 2006.

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